



[Meera Nanda](#)

## Philosophical Battlefield

*This week brings the last of the ten parts of our CU Generic Course called “Philosophy, Religion, and Revolution”. There will be three items, of which this is the first. The suggested item for discussion is the last one: Ron Press’s “**New Tools for Marxists**”, linked below; but if you can at least skim the other two, the discussion will be more complete. Hence the change of order.*

The question of the collective human subject has been most concisely and forcefully expressed in this series by Cyril Smith in the section of “[The Communist Manifesto after 150 Years](#)” called “**The Subject of History**”.

The first linked download for this final part is “Postmodernism & Hindu Nationalism” by the philosopher [Meera Nanda](#) [pictured]. This work is given because it shows how several pathological,

anti-human strands of philosophy can play out in concert, mutually reinforcing and amplifying each other. In the case of India as shown in this article, these were Postmodernism; Hindu Nationalism (“Hindutva”); “Vedic Science”; and reactionary feminism.

Time has passed since the CU first began using this text. Ten years ago it was cutting-edge, and it is still useful to South Africans because the question of rational science, of feminism and of “Congress” politics and of potential successors to “Congress” have meaning for us. But Postmodernism has receded. It is no longer so sure of itself or so hegemonic as in the past.

Meera Nanda described her purpose thus:

*“This essay is more about the left wing-counterpart of [Yankee] Hindutva: a set of postmodernist ideas, mostly (but not entirely) exported from the West, which unintentionally ends up supporting Hindutva's propaganda regarding Vedic science. Over the last couple of decades, a set of very fashionable, supposedly "radical" critiques of modern science have dominated the Western universities. These critical theories of science go under the label of "postmodernism" or "social constructivism". These theories see modern science as an essentially Western, masculine and imperialistic way of acquiring knowledge. Intellectuals of Indian origin, many of them living and working in the West, have played a lead role in development of postmodernist critiques of modern science as a source of*

*colonial "violence" against non-Western ways of knowing."*

The Indian case is not altogether different to what was, and could again be, the situation in South Africa, where under President Thabo Mbeki we had Postmodernism (bourgeois "normality" following the liberation struggle); pseudo-science around HIV/AIDS (Virodene, African potato, beetroot et cetera); Africanism; and again, reactionary feminism.

What is common to all of these aspects, whether in India or in South Africa, is the evacuation of popular agency and refusal of the mass Subject of History following the liberation struggle, which in both cases had promised this (mass popular agency) above all other things. In India the promise was "[Swaraj](#)" and in South Africa, "**Power to the People**".

Independence and national sovereignty were supposed to be inseparable from mass popular agency. In practice, political independence co-existed with bourgeois dictatorship and neo-colonialism, and these latter factors trumped and negated mass popular power. The flight from mass popular agency was a middle-class and bourgeois betrayal of the workers and the poor.

Revolutionary organs of people's power were dismantled in each case. Golden Calves were raised up for worship, in substitution for the slogans of popular power. These substitutes were the slogans of bourgeois nationalism and of national mystique.

Postmodernism is the hopeless, degenerate philosophy of the hopeless, degenerate thing called Imperialism. The fight for full freedom in a world dominated by Imperialism was unavoidably a fight against Postmodernism. It is a revolutionary necessity. The purpose of this CU Generic Course called “Philosophy, Religion, and Revolution” has been to arm the communists for such battles. Above all what is needed is devotion to and priority for the human Subject, i.e. **Power to the People!**

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Postmodernism and Hindu Nationalism, 2004, Nanda.](#)
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here.](#)